

**Approved Summary of
Meeting of the Taunton Bay Advisory Group
6 PM Tuesday October 16th
Franklin Town Office
Facilitated by Sherman Hoyt
University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service**

Present: Doug Kimmel, Frank Dorsey, Steve Perrin, Antonio Blasi, Mike Briggs, Lee Hudson, Slade Moore, Shep Erhart, Sen. Dennis Damon, Sherman Hoyt and John Sowles.

In conjunction with approval of previous meeting summary, the first portion of the meeting was spent, for benefit of clarification and advisors not present, reviewing what was agreed at the last meeting. Steve suggested we add the name of recorder and date on everything we turn out in anticipation of reference material accumulating over time.

Action: Minutes approved with addition of date and recorder.

Regarding the opportunity for public comment, the facilitator will try to manage time so there is opportunity for public to comment. Antonio thought there would time at both the beginning and at end while only time at the end was noted in the minutes. Frank suggested calling it public comment "period" so it has defined time limit, set by the facilitator, depending on the number of people interested in commenting. Antonio suggested a period be limited to 5-10 minutes. Sen. Damon offered that these are not hearings but meetings of an advisory group. It is good to get information out but we should try to avoid repetitious comments. The Taunton Bay Advisory Group is here to do business and must use time well. Steve wanted to afford the public an opportunity to add comments, but at the end of each meeting to avoid side tracking business at hand. At that time, they could suggest future agenda items. It will be up to the facilitator to manage public so as to get information yet not wear out the advisory group and keep meetings productive.

Lee asked what the process might be to draw comments from the public once the Taunton Bay Advisory Group has a recommendation. Sen. Damon agreed it is good to get public opinion. Once we have a recommendation, we can decide the details of how to engage the public. John noted that regardless of public reaction, support or opposition, it generally helps DMR. John sees his role as one to help the Taunton Bay Advisory Group understand what is feasible, impractical, illegal, so that proposals make sense and are supportable. That doesn't mean we always agree with the public comments, but at least it allows us to present more basis for our position. We can do press releases etc, web pages, etc. Antonio asked how much time we want to invest in public dissemination. Lee thought it depends on how much public support we want from whomever.

Discussion moved on the type of minutes the group wanted. John had not had time to provide the condensed minutes requested at the last meeting and asked if the group really wanted them. The purpose of the condensed minutes was to avoid attributing names to comments. Frank suggested that a full draft be reviewed by each Taunton Bay Advisory Group member and letting each person comment back to John about whether they wanted their name attached to statements.

Lee suggested we use the Robert Rules model and list motions and actions only.

Frank suggested we could reduce it to bold key nouns, no disapprovals is an approval by default. John asked who would do this condensation since he could not commit to doing this in a timely manner.

Action: John will send a first draft of minutes to advisors for comment. If there are attributions or statements that trouble anyone, they are to call or email John ASAP. A second draft of the minutes will be mailed to the advisors in the meeting packet and finalized and approved at the next monthly meeting and only then released to the public.

Mission Statement:

Slade and Lee reported on their efforts. Originally they thought they would stay close to the DMR management plan's two main points. But then they decided there needed to be more details and proposed a new set. These emphasize appropriate local scale and the complementary effect of local knowledge and science. The proposed with amendments from this meeting are in the box below:

Draft 2 of Mission Statement for the Taunton Bay Advisory Council
Slade Moore and Lee Hudson
October 19, 2007

The mission of the Taunton Bay Advisory Group is to advise the Maine Department of Marine Resources on the creation of a Comprehensive Marine Resource Management Plan that promotes enduring long-term ecosystem health by:

- 1) integrating local knowledge, expertise, and guidance with a scientific approach to address locally-relevant questions at an appropriate scale.
- 2) supporting the integrity and resilience of the Taunton Bay estuary and the shore-side human communities that are inextricably linked.
- 3) encouraging the sustainable use and enjoyment of the bay by all, ~~the Citizens of Maine.~~

From the "Refresher on Taunton Bay Project"
John Sowles, August 1, 2007

This past legislative session, the DMR presented and the Legislature's Marine Resources Committee accepted a plan to manage human uses of Taunton Bay in a manner that will:

- 1.) protect and sustain ecological functions and values, and manage marine resources for the long-term use and enjoyment of all citizens of Maine.

Shep asked what appropriate scale meant. Answer - Frequently resources are managed with broad brush and lack resolution needed to manage the specific instance of a smaller area or

resource. . Lee offered that there might be statewide mussel issues but we must deal with those in Taunton Bay.

Slade added that it was important to include integrity and resilience, the ability of an ecosystem and shoreside community system to bounce back. People must be part of the plan. There are plenty of examples where poverty results in nonsupport of ecological health. Since economic desperation often drives desperate actions, we must address the human aspect in the plan in order to achieve ecological goals. This also emphasizes the idea of Taunton Bay as part of the larger public trust for all citizens of Maine.

Someone noted the confusion over the Taunton Bay Advisory Group's title. Are we a group, committee, or council? The consensus was that we are a "Group"

Frank proposed that we strike "citizens of Maine." The public trust includes more than just Maine citizens. Shep recommended deleting "appropriate scale." Steve preferred the DMR language as being more succinct and broader and it includes ecological function and long-term use and enjoyment.

Antonio asked why we didn't want to use original. Frank thought that methodology was lacking in the original and Lee thought it lacked the cultural component.

Doug thought the mission statement is very important. Doug likes the one Slade and Lee's as it is ours. But since not all the advisors were here, he suggested tabling it and give time for the others to read and discuss.

Action:

- John will send out both versions to group.

- Charge to group, look at both and make decision.

- Steve noted that in both versions, the role of the advisory group was missing.

- Slade will revise and resend to group.

The group thanked Slade and Lee for their hard work on this.

Media and Compliance

John described DMR's policy on media and external communications. He is quite comfortable with it and feels it balances the need for transparency and public communication with respect for internal policy development. We are free to talk about what we know to be fact. If there are policy questions, we refer those to the Commissioner's office. If there are technical questions within one's area of expertise, then we are also free to discuss. Regarding compliance, he sees this as an issue of avoiding the perception of secrecy or non-transparency, which leads to out of control misperceptions, versus risking trust in our fellow advisors to say the right thing. He sees this as a necessary risk. Eventually we will develop a trust that we all are well intentioned even if we may stumble here and there.

Doug said that if reporter approached him, he or she would not get much information without talking to individuals. There is a danger if one writes article or letter to the editor. If we want media coverage, we should invite them. We all must be careful to not speak out of turn for group. John urged people to invoke a 24 hr rule. He cautioned that no matter what, with a group this size, there will be someone who will be upset with a reporter's account. He urged folks not to react right away. Contact a "buddy," himself, anyone. Do not write a rebuttal or clarification

without discussing with the group. And by all means, if you must write or rebut, be sure not to portray yourself as spokesperson for the group if you are not cleared to do so.

Antonio thought much misperception might be avoided by send approved minutes to all selectmen. Slade preferred not to send full minutes, just bullets. Doug noted we are at full circle. We discussed adding UMeCCAR and others to an email list.

Action:

We will mail a hard copy to the 3 abutting towns
John and Sherm with create an email list of others.

Antonio – label approved in title

We briefly discussed the need for paid staff but quickly dispensed that discussion for lack of money.

Regarding communications with the Taunton Bay Advisory Group, we discussed the pros and cons of email. Doug noted it as a flawed device. Emails can be received and not read. However, some things can be done by email but not for general communication. Telephone and active acknowledgement that an email has been received and read is still best way to go.

Action:

Meeting packets will be sent both in hardcopy and email.

Meeting Schedule will be the 3rd Tuesday of each month except November, when it will be the 27th after Thanksgiving. We will hold December's, 3rd Tuesday but since so close to holidays, we will need to decide at next meeting if that day is needed or even available.

Drag Management Plan discussion

John handed out an outline (attached) of his rationale for the DMR proposal and briefly discussed the main points.

Steve shared handouts that included aerial photographs of recent turbidity plumes throughout the bay after a strong wind as well as a plume from a canoe within the proposed drag area. He raised turbidity as an issue of concern, not just from dragging, but from several sources. Slade supported the fact that fine sediments are prevalent and reported that of the 120 cores samples he took during his study, most all were silt-mud that contributes to turbidity. Steve discussed use of the bay by harbor seals noting 57 bodies on one ledge in the middle of the proposed drag area which is also the only pupping ledge in bay. The seals are very skittery between April and June. Steve also pointed out that of the horseshoe crabs in the bay, there is no known exchange of individuals between Egypt and Hog Bays, and based on tracking 13 crabs in Egypt Bay, he estimates that may be around 600-800 crabs in bay. Steve also pointed to aerial photographs in his handout showing lots of eelgrass around Burying Island in July 1999. Even if it is not present today, it is still eelgrass habitat. Therefore, his concern is that the more we drag it follows that less eelgrass will come back. He raises questions over whether this is a suitable site and would like further discussion on sites.

Slade noted that in end, it is a societal choice. Horseshoe crabs in Taunton Bay are genetically distinct, small restricted populations that do not exchange with other populations probably don't leave bay. Also, there are probably no new entrants to the bay. Their isolation and non-migratory aspect tells him that if significant change or pressure is put on them, they will have a lower likelihood for survival. He is also interested in knowing the duration of a drag in area or management zone since depending on duration; we could be delaying recovery of eelgrass and other bottom communities. This would be especially true if the drag areas were permanent. John pointed out that the intent of the DMR plan was to be adaptive and that areas should change given the overall management needs, goals and objectives as well as new knowledge. The successful legislation that allows the DMR to pass new rules in Taunton Bay without legislative approval was to address this very point.

Frank asked about mitigation of eelgrass suggesting that if we have a drag area, then we mitigate by restoring another area of equivalent size or value.

Doug sees this as a balance of how to take resources with least impact and asked if we can fund the research on the impacts through the profit from mussels or products harvested. Slade noted that the cost of research would likely exceed value of resource, especially low priced mussels.

Doug conceded there might not be enough profit now but Frank also pointed out that if we restore the stocks, then we might have an opportunity. John also pointed out that the DMR drag plan did contain a proposal that harvesters report certain information such as bycatch, population structure, etc. that could be used knowledge in answering some of these questions.

Steve suggested we propose a set of alternating sites over different seasons to avoid hitting one area hard.

Lee found it interesting that we were so concerned about the effect of dragging on horseshoe crabs when Heath, who has dragged for years, didn't know horseshoe crabs even existed here. Lee then mentioned that Heath's father, who had dragged for mussels near Burying Is., informed Heath that he had seen horseshoe crabs in the Bay.

Doug requested a list of data and questions for the group.

At the end of the drag management discussion, John acknowledged that the DMR proposal is not perfect. But with help from the advisors, he hoped that we could form a plan which met the goals of the overall bay plan and with which we were comfortable. He requested advisors please point out areas and information gaps that prevent folks from being comfortable with the DMR proposal so we can either address them or propose alternatives.

Action:

John to provide list of questions and data available.

Lee proposed a different approach to a drag management plan and offered instead that we develop the comprehensive science based resource management plan that was originally intended. She suggested that the Maine Seaweed Council has such a plan for seaweed and passed out a new matrix that she developed using the MSC matrix as a start. She suggested that we break down our plan by species and then look at how they interrelate. Include information on who to talk to for advice and knowledge. This would then become the framework to look at for

overall plan, within which would be drag management. These are not necessarily recommendations but just a way to look at it.

Action:

Lee will send proposed matrix electronically.

For Next Meeting

Meet with Commissioner George Lapointe to review progress

Begin developing drag management alternative to the DMR proposal

Include Confidentiality as agenda item.

Steve would like to look at lobster industry as a model of sustainability.

Meeting Adjourned about 8:30

Sowles' Rationale for Supporting DMR Option 5.

Dragging Area

- I am personally familiar with the proposed harvest area
- substrate coarse resulting in less suspended sediment
- mussel beds are currently dominant feature of this bottom
- harvest is a relatively "clean" harvest with little bycatch
- lines were drawn for enforcement purposes and do not indicate actual area that will be dragged
- actual harvest area is probably less than 1/10th area delineated

Horseshoe Crab Population

- while genetically distinct, I do not consider the population in jeopardy since
- dragging area at outer edge of known overwintering area in channels
- dragging area designed to minimize contact with HSCs
- bycatch will be monitored and reported
- If bycatch includes HSCs (or any other species of concern), we can revise area or stop activity altogether.

Shorebirds

- Area overlaps DIFW Designated Significant Wildlife Habitat for Shorebirds
- However, area is a roosting area, not a feeding area
- Dragging occurs at high tide when feeding is less an issue
- Dragging will be probably be fewer than a dozen trips spread over 10 months (compare this to kayaking, lobstering, recreational fishing, general boat traffic)

Seal Haulouts

- Routine fishing activity is a minor disturbance to seals.
- Dragging is during high tide when most seals are not on the haulouts
- Dragging will be infrequent, certainly less than other vessels and recreation

Eelgrass

- Currently not eelgrass habitat
- Mussels and eelgrass go through cycles with eelgrass a primary and secondary settlement substrate. As mussels grow, eelgrass dies back to be taken over by mussels. Cycle repeats itself.